

Message Text

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73

ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: MPOL, UK

SUBJ: DEFENSE AND THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE

1. AT THE ANNUAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE, WHICH OPENED 27 SEPTEMBER, THE DEBATE ON DEFENSE IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER L, BUT IT MAY NOT BE HELD. IF IT IS, WE EXPECT THE USUAL FIREWORKS FROM THE LABOR LEFT WHO ARE EXTREMELY UNHAPPY WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S "TOO HIGH SPENDING" ON DEFENSE. THE LEFT-WING CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAKE A MAJOR ATTACK ON DEFENSE POLICY AIMED AT SEEKING SUBSTANTIAL FURTHER REDUCTIONS IN DEFENSE SPENDING. HOWEVER, AFTER THE ANTICIPATED EMOTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL BOMBAST HAS RUN ITS COURSE AND THE DUST SETTLES, WE EXPECT THAT IF A VOTE COMES IT IS LIKELY TO BE ON A WATERED DOWN COMPOSITE RESOLUTION WHICH WILL HAVE LITTLE IF ANY EFFECT ON THE GOVERNMENT.

2. FRED MULLEY, THE NEW DEFENSE SECRETARY -- AND A MEMBER OF THE LABOR PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE -- HAS BEEN BARRED FROM REPLYING TO THE CONFERENCE DEBATE ON DEFENSE. RON HAYWARD, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PARTY, HAS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT MULLEY CANNOT REPLY ON BEHALF OF THE

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NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BECAUSE THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE NEED FOR

FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL DEFENSE CUTS CONFLICT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES -- AS WELL AS WITH MULLEY'S VIEWS AS DEFENSE SECRETARY. HAYWARD, IN A CALCULATED SNUB THAT UNDERSCORES THE WIDE GULF BETWEEN THE LEFT-DOMINATED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND THE GOVERNMENT, TOOK THE LINE THAT THE CONFERENCE IS MEANT TO BE A PLATFORM FOR THE PARTY AND NOT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND HENCE MULLEY COULD NOT PUT FORWARD ADEQUATELY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE'S CASE FOR MORE DEFENSE CUTS AS HE IS NOW THE DEFENSE SECRETARY. MULLEY, A FORMER PARTY CHAIRMAN AND A RIGHT-WINGER, IS REPORTED TO BE HIGHLY IRRITATED BY THIS SNUB.

ARMSTRONG

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